

Young People's Society

AT THE CROSS.

Topic For Sunday, May 16:

Pilgrim's Progress Series, No. V. At the Cross.

John 19: 16-27; Luke 23: 39-49.

DAILY READINGS.

Monday: Deliverance at the Cross. John 3: 14-18.
 Tuesday: What becomes of sin? Micah 7: 18-20.
 Wednesday: Joy at the Cross. Galatians 6: 14-18.
 Thursday: Peace at the Cross. Romans 5: 1-11.
 Friday: Cleansing at the Cross. Hebrews 9: 12-14.
 Saturday: Sealed at the Cross. Ephesians 1: 7-14.

Bunyan's Pilgrim felt the burden which was bound to him roll off when he looked at the cross.

The load of sin is loosened when the sinner turns his eyes towards Christ, and can no longer be bound upon him.

"The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

"Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." "By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." "He was made sin for us."

With the burden of guilt goes also the burden of corruption. A new life is born in the believer and he has the power of endless life. "Death hath no more dominion over him." "Old things have passed away."

The burden of sorrow is also relieved in the presence of the cross. Christ either removes it entirely or gives grace and strength both to bear it and to get power and sweetness out of it. At the sight of him helping and sympathizing, grief takes its flight.

The peace of God that is inexpressible and that "passeth all understanding" is shed abroad in our hearts through Christ Jesus. And it is not a merely negative peace, either. There is "joy in the Holy Ghost." At the cross anthems of praise are started.

All suffering is not sin, nor is it always indicative of sinfulness before God. Many a time it is God's discipline of his child. But at the sight of the cross even the hard elements of discipline melt away, and there the presence of the Teacher makes the lesson an easier one and the trained quicker and surer.

Even tribulation becomes, at the cross, a source of gladness. "We glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

God's promise which is ever sure, his covenant which will not be broken, is the roll placed in our hands, to assure and comfort us along the pilgrim's way. He places his word in our hands, to be our one guide and stay. When we put it down our feet slide, our steps falter, our spirits fail, we are compelled to retrace our steps for awhile.

The way of the cross is the simplest way ever devised. All it requires is a look. The serpent-bitten Israelites had only to look to the brazen serpent hung by Moses, at God's command, where all who would might turn their eyes to it and be healed. So has Christ been lifted up and the dying soul of the guiltiest has but to look to him in faith and have life.

"There's life for a look at the Crucified One,

There's life at this moment for thee.

Then look, sinner, look unto him and be saved,

Unto him who was nailed to the tree."

Prayer Meeting

Topic: LIVING EPISTLES.

2 Cor. 3: 1-3.

Week Beginning May 9.

The inspired writer had been discoursing on the responsibility of his office. As he thought of the tremendous issues that hung on his ministry, he said, "Who is sufficient for these things?" He had occasion to insist, despite the misgivings of some of the brethren at Corinth, that he and his associates were "unto God a sweet savor of Christ," speaking in Christ, "as of God, in the sight of God." To "them that are saved" their doctrine was as a delightful perfume, exhilarating the spirits, invigorating the health and perfecting the life. In sincerity and simplicity as a messenger from God and under the impulse of his grace, he commended Christ and his salvation, regardless of self-interest or the attitude of his hearers.

The apostles' critics would be disposed to censure this justification of his ministry as an instance of his "commending himself." Against such an unjust suspicion he makes his defense. He insists that he does not need any human testimony to his character in coming to them. Why should testimonials from other churches in his behalf be required? Or why should the church at Corinth give written testimonials to others in their favor? The Corinthians themselves were his epistles of commendation.

The apostle firmly believed in their genuine conversion. If this were not misplaced confidence they could not question the genuineness of his ministry through which their conversion had been accomplished. The fact that they were Christians, settled the other fact that his ministry was of God. His language here is very strong. He calls them "The epistle of Christ ministered by us." Christ wrote this "epistle" by his Holy Spirit, using the apostle as his amanuensis.

The conversion of the ungodly and their subsequent lives of faith and obedience, contribute the best letters of commendation to the genuineness of Christian work. It constitutes the attestation of Christ himself and is the declaration of his approval. It is written not in formal words that may err, but by the Spirit of the living God, on the hearts of the people and is declared in their lives. Our zeal for the interests of our Lord's kingdom is to find its true expression in the maintenance of that quality of character which corresponds to the teachings of his gospel.

It is altogether possible that many who receive the most faithful and able ministry may prove themselves to be unworthy of it and untrue to its beneficent guidance. The blame is not upon the doctrine that is taught, nor on the ministry, but on perverse and disobedient hearts, and these are of the number that "shall be beaten with many stripes." How serious is the obligation that professing Christians shall consistently obey the commands and imitate the example of their Lord, who writes his approval in living letters on every faithful heart!

Remembering that "we are not sufficient of ourselves, to think anything of ourselves" we should expect our entire spiritual endowment to come from him to whom all the glory of our salvation belongs.

It is a rare honor to be made able ministers of the New Testament. We shall not come to that pre-eminence of service to which the Master appointed his servant, Paul, yet we may imitate the same principles, cherish the same motives, imitate the same example, love the same great cause, manifest the same loyal, devoted Spirit, anticipate the crown of righteousness, as he did, and bear the same faithful witness to the end.